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ABSTRACT

Foreign language and bilingual educators are in the unique position of being able to bring the world to their classrooms via the telecommunications technologies. Telecommunication is electronic communication over long distances by means of an online computer service, a telephone, a television, a satellite, or other long distance technologies. This digest discusses many of the resources available to foreign language educators, including De Orilla A Orilla, The Computer Writing Network, CompuServe, Minitel, The Global TELEclass Project (Telecommunication Enriches Language Experience), and the Satellite Communications for Learning (SCOLA). The advantages of using telecommunications in the foreign language classroom are highlighted. (VWL)

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Telecommunications in Foreign Language Education: A Resource List

Julie Krause

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ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS

ERIC Digest

Telecommunications in Foreign Language Education: A Resource List

Prepared by Julie Krause

December 1989

Foreign language and bilingual educators are in the unique position of being able to bring the world to their classrooms via the new telecommunications technologies. Telecommunication is electronic communication over long distances by means of an online computer service, a telephone, a television, a satellite, or other "long distance" technologies.

There are many alternatives available in telecommunication technology, and educators must decide which of these alternatives are the most instructionally appropriate to meet their students' needs. For example, through a computer hooked up to a telephone line via modem, students in one classroom can exchange information with students in another city or even in another country. Through the use of a satellite dish and a television, students can view and hear native language programs from all over the world .

This *Digest* discusses the many possibilities available to foreign language educators for enhancing instruction through telecommunication technology. Sample telecommunications programs, organizations, and services for foreign language and bilingual teachers and students are mentioned below with addresses and resources provided at the end of the *Digest*.

Programs and Services Offered Via Telecommunications

De Orilla A Orilla (From Shore to Shore) is a telecommunications project in which groups of "Sister Classes" are set up between classrooms in the United States and other countries for bilingual, English as a second language, and foreign language students. The goal of the project is to increase students' proficiency in one or two languages through written communication with a class in another country, and to improve their understanding of another culture. The sister classes participate in whole-class joint projects (to enrich language arts, science and social studies, and math or other content-based lessons) and exchange cultural packets via regular mail (letters, photographs, drawings, student-made audio or videotapes) at least once each month. Languages currently included in the network are English, French, and Spanish.

The Computer Writing Network at the National Heritage Language Resource Unit (NHLRU) in Canada encourages second language learning maintenance and stimulates cultural interchange between students in French immersion or NHLRU language classes in Canada and students in other countries, including Portugal, Brazil, the United States, and China. Support materials for both process writing and the computer network have been developed, and writing folders in French, English, and ten other languages are available from NHLRU.

CompuServe, a commercial computer network that requires a computer, communications software, a phone line, and a modem, provides users with the opportunity to communicate with each other and to retrieve information online. Users with similar interests can join a forum that enables them to receive or contribute information in their specific fields. On the CompuServe network, the Foreign Language Education Forum (FLEFO) allows foreign language and bilingual teachers to contact each other, check the job market, and download public domain software. The FLEFO libraries menu includes: Foreign Language Education, Spanish/Portuguese, French, German/ Germanic, Latin/Greek, Slavic/East European, East Asian, and other languages.

CompuServe, like other commercial networks, provides access to electronic mail, bulletin boards, data libraries, and online conferences. *Electronic Mail* (E-Mail) is a fast and usually inexpensive way to send messages to a specific individual or group. Recent developments in E-Mail may now make it possible for most systems, including Bitnet and the commercial systems (i.e., CompuServe and MCI Mail) to communicate with one another. Regardless of the system a party uses to send or receive messages, anyone with E-Mail can communicate with anyone else that has an electronic mail address. There is an initial fee for the software package and an hourly (or monthly for some networks) service charge based on local phone connect charges (with evening and weekend rates available). *Bulletin boards* enable users to post and read messages, ask questions, offer suggestions, and exchange information with other users of the forum. For example,

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a teacher planning to take a group of students abroad can ask for general information on the bulletin board and get answers back from anyone else who happens to read the message. *Data libraries* make it possible to browse through a series of abstracts of longer articles or to call up key words on a specific topic. Articles can then be printed out or downloaded on diskette or a hard disk. *Online conferencing* allows for the convening of an electronic conference with other members of the forum all over the country. The CompuServe package is sold by most software dealers.

Minitel is a French commercial network service that is now available in the United States. (The name of the computer-like unit is also Minitel.) It is being used in pilot sites to enable students of French to communicate in writing with native speakers in France. Minitel is also being used by deaf foreign language students at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC.

The Global TELEclass Project (Telecommunication Enriches Language Experiences) in Hawaii was established to assist foreign language students in interacting directly with their counterparts learning English in other countries. Some of the tele-systems use speakerphones and videophones (freeze-frame or slow-scan) that transmit still video images over telephone lines. In addition to reading and writing via computer, students can see and communicate verbally with each other. Students in Hawaii, Japan, China, Korea, Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Canada have been part of these "school partnership" groups.

The Satellite Communications for Learning (SCOLA) is a consortium of colleges and universities that provides members with foreign news and information via satellite. The programs are unedited and are live or short-delay in the original language. The current 24-hour broadcast airs programs from 15 countries daily and a dozen or more on a rotating basis. Other frequencies will carry high speed data with resources fed into computers connected to the satellite signal, including vocabulary, discussion topics, speech pattern exercises, and graduated difficulty quizzes. The computer can also receive the text printout of the original language as well as the translation into English. Affiliation fees are based on the total numbers of students on a campus. SCOLA can be used to supplement classes in foreign language, international business, international law, international studies, and international relations.

Advantages of Using Telecommunications in the Foreign Language Classroom

°Learning via a computer network provides an opportunity for improving reading and writing skills in the target language.
°Learning via satellite programs can increase listening comprehension skills and develop cultural understanding.
°Learning via distance technologies allows both students and educators to interact with native speakers in other countries.
°Learning via interactive telecommunication technology media permits real (and live) communication in the target language.
°Learning via interactive telecommunications provides opportunities for developing international understanding and cross-cultural communication skills.

The effect of these technologies depends on their appropriate use by informed educators and motivated students, and with integrated multi-media curricula. The impact of the different telecommunication technologies on language learning provides a rich domain for future qualitative and quantitative research.

The examples above are only a few of the many telecommunications projects available to foreign language educators. Perhaps the future will hold many additional possibilities for making the world smaller and the opportunities for teaching and learning foreign languages much greater.

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Resources

CTL Communications, 611 Broadway, NY 10012, (212) 477-2424. (Minitel).

DeOrilla A Orilla. Contact: Denis Sayers, 2-1102 Peabody Terrace, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 497-9524 or Kirstin Brown, 213 Hilt Road, Hornbrook, CA 96044, (916) 475-3748.

NHLRU Computer Writing Project, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor Street W., Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1V6, Canada. Contact: Dr. Jim Cummins.

SCOLA, 2500 California St., Omaha, NE 68178-0778, (402) 280-4063.

TELEclass, Univ. of Hawaii, School of Education, Curriculum, Research and Development Group, 1776 University Avenue, Memorial Hall 132, Honolulu, HA 96825 or call (808) 948-6871. Contact: John Southworth, Technical Director.

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